Who'll Write an Anthem?
Park Vandalism

Letters to the Tribune's Editor

I wholly disapprove of what you say and will defend to the death your right to say it.—Voltaire to Helvetius.

Aerial Torpedoes
Fire Insurance Burden

The Battleship Target

Bomb Dropping Harmless Compared With Torpedo Dropping—Big Guns Useless, Says English Expert

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: There was a letter published recently in The Tribune regarding airplanes bombing battleships. Your correspondent quoted C. G. Grey, editor of The Aeroplane, an English aeronautical journal, as seeming to minimize the effect of bombing. Mr. Grey is a believer in the value of aerial torpedoes, as is shown by the following statements recently made by him:

"I am glad to see that you are interested in the subject of Aircraft vs. Capital Ships. Briefly, my personal opinion is that the capital ship of the future will be a very big high-speed aircraft carrier, which will use torpedo aeroplanes instead of long-range guns, and otherwise will be equipped with what is now considered secondary armament for use against hostile aeroplanes and against submarines. She will also have to carry fighting aeroplanes to repel torpedo droppers.

"Bomb dropping against ships is harmless as compared with torpedo dropping. Think of the number of errors which a bomb dropper can make. A torpedo dropper, on the other hand, has not to worry about anything except line. The torpedo itself looks after its altitude in relation to the surface of the water. The speed of the aeroplane hardly matters in the least, so the only thing the pilot has to think about is the speed of the vessel which he is going to torpedo and the distance she will cover in the time his torpedo will take to reach her.

"And as he probably has 300 feet of ship for a target, he has a pretty wide margin for error. Big guns on ships are now practically useless, because their range is limited not by the gun, but by the human eye, by the curve of the earth (i. e., the horizon) and by the atmospheric visibility prevailing at the moment.

"Apart from that, the naval gunner in any fleet is about the worst gunner in the world. I think it is pretty generally admitted that the shooting of the United States Navy was not as good as ours and ours was certainly not anything like as good as the Germans'. If the Germans had had a fleet 60 to 75 per cent as big as ours at Jutland they would simply have blown us out of the water on sheer superior gunnery.

"Even so, British naval gunnery is not bad as naval gunnery goes, but compared with the army artillery men's gunnery it simply does not exist. The naval gunner practically knows nothing of the elements of really scientific artillery work as understood by the field artillery or the garrison gunner. Still less does he know anything about the completely new science of aerial gunnery as developed by our anti-aircraft gunners in the London air defense area during the war. Consequently the sooner the navy's guns are taken away from it and replaced by aeroplanes, flown by people who do know something about their job, the better for the navy."

The success of the Royal Air Force with torpedoes has been so great that the results are being guarded with great secrecy. It is not generally known that twice British fleets at anchor were hit by a sufficient number of torpedoes to practically put the fleet out of commission. Australia has ordered some of these torpedo planes for its own defense. G.

New York, June 9, 1921.

The National Anthem

What Was Said of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1861—A Committee's Report

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The controversy regarding "The Star-Spangled Banner" as our authorized national hymn has brought out a number of interesting letters in your paper.

It may be of interest to know the subject was considered during the Civil War. The New York Times, in an editorial, said:

"A national hymn seems almost as indispensable an appanage of nationality as a national flag. Patriotic feeling excited by any unusual incident always seeks expression in noise and music. That we have thus far been without a recognized national hymn must be attributed partly to the brevity of our national existence."

Speaking of the popular tunes of the day, the editorial says of "The Star-Spangled Banner":

"The music, the tune, requires a compass of voice quite uncommon merely to sing. The notes and verse are so intricate and in one of the stanzas so harsh and so ill-adapted to vocalization that it fails entirely to fulfill the office of a national song. All attempts to modify this air have only succeeded in taking away some of its characteristic spirit, without making it more singable for the masses of the people."

What The Times said of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1861 is just as applicable to-day. Many of the attempts during our last great war to sing our national hymn were pitiful.

In 1861 a committee was appointed to call for the production of a national American hymn and to offer a prize of $500 for the same. The committee made simplicity, both in words and music, an essential condition. The following is in substance the report of the "Committee Upon a National Hymn," dated August 9, 1861:

They received 1,200 manuscripts; only one-third furnished new music and words. Every manuscript received was read and duly considered. Every musical composition was performed once, and those found sufficiently meritorious were heard in solo and chorus. With comparatively few exceptions, the hymns sent in proved to be of interest only to their writers, as rhymed expressions of personal feeling or fancy.

Of the exceptions many were excluded from special consideration as being purely devotional or because they were written either to the national airs of other peoples or to those in certain vogue with us, the acknowledged insufficiency of which was reason for the appointment of this committee. They, therefore, made no award. They would not advise the public trial of any of them, but if publishers wished to bring out any of these at their own risk they might do so.

The committee were: G. C. Verplanck, Charles King, Hamilton Fish, George William Curtis, J. J. Cisco, George T. Strong, Maunsell B. Field, John A. Dix, M. H. Grinnell, Luther Bradish, Richard Grant White, John R. Broadhead, Arthur Leary and B. Field.

Would it not be well if an effort were made to-day to compose a national hymn that would be more acceptable than "The Star-Spangled Banner"? A. WAKEMAN.

New York, June 10, 1921.

Saloon Elimination

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: In your recent editorial dealing with prohibition you suggest that we go back to the original idea of the Anti-Saloon League, namely, the elimination of the saloon.

I wish William H. Anderson would tell us just what was the original purpose of the founders of the Anti-Saloon League.

If that purpose was merely to do away with the saloon, is it not accomplished? G. A. POLK.

New York, June 10, 1921.

"The Tune Makes the Song"

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: W. H. Price will find indorsement of his opinion that the text of a national anthem is of secondary importance in the French proverb "C'est le ton qui fait la chanson" ("The tune makes the song"). This may pacify his literary friends.

R. W. BOISSEVAIN.

New York, June 9, 1921.

Call to Oklahomans

Pioneer With Stirring Memories Would Form an Organization

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The opening of Oklahoma April 22, 1889, was an important event in the history of America. It was the culmination of a long fight between the people on the one side, clamoring for land, and the so-called "cattle barons" on the other. It was the wedge which in a few years opened millions of acres of land to settlement and cultivation, caused the organization of Oklahoma Territory, later the extinction of the Indian Territory and finally the admission to the Union of the present State of Oklahoma.

I had the good fortune to be personally and officially identified with those stirring days. The only place that has been, or probably will be, accorded me in history is a short notice in an early publication of those days edited by one of the pioneer women.

Many of those early settlers have achieved fame and fortune. Some of them I have on more than one occasion "staked" to "a stack of wheats" at one of the many "short order" houses in Oklahoma City, Guthrie, Chandler, Perry and other towns, the prevailing price of which in those days was 20 cents. The price of a pint bottle of Budweiser was $1.

Those pioneers came from and now are scattered throughout every state of the Union.

I was in Oklahoma last year and visited many of its beautiful cities, which in those first days were cities of tents laid out on the prairie. Now asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks and immense blocks of brick, stone and concrete and residences that would do credit to Riverside Drive have supplanted the dirt streets, the plank sidewalks and the frame dwellings. All this within the short space of thirty-two years.

I am informed that Oklahoma has an old settlers' society which celebrates each year the anniversary of the opening of Oklahoma, April 22, 1889. I have from time to time seen in the papers that this day is held in the same esteem as the year 1849 of California fame. The eighty-niners certainly are identified with an event of equal importance. To the writer's personal knowledge there now live in New York and its environs many who took part in these events. I know several who have many reminiscences and documents of those days rich in historical value. On several occasions it has been suggested to me to form an organization to perpetuate those associations and to preserve matters of historical value.

To this end and for the purpose of getting in touch with those interested may I ask those who are in any way interested in the State of Oklahoma to communicate with the undersigned? ALLEN CARUTHERS.

1482 Broadway, New York, June 10, 1921.

Protecting the Parks

Use and Abuse of the City's Pleasure Grounds—Mischief Hard to Check

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The biggest injury to the parks by the indifferent and ignorant is not to trees, shrubs and flowers, but to the scenery, by the scattering of thousands of pieces of newspapers over the beautiful lawns. I asked a laborer in Central Park who was gathering paper how many men are engaged in that work and he answered from eighteen to twenty and that they are each paid $5 a day.

If children were allowed to play on less important lawns with a little more freedom, and particularly if pedestrians be allowed to penetrate the deeper beauties of the park, away from the cement walks, not one-tenth the injury now done by the scattering of newspapers would result.

Real lovers of the beautiful who like to wander through the unbeaten paths of Central Park are sternly ordered back to the cement walks, but millions of dollars worth of ground is not only set aside but maintained in perfect condition for the use of people rich enough to ride horseback. I am not kicking at the horseback riders. They are an interesting feature, but the same liberality of treatment should be extended to pedestrians.

In Rock Creek Park, Washington, one of the handsomest parks in the world, you can wander where you will. Little if any injury results from this broad and generous view of the proper use of a park. The benefits greatly outbalance the small possible injuries. C. M. C.

New York, June 10, 1921.

Label the Park Spoilers

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Would it not be a fitting punishment to compel every despoiler and litterer to wear a badge for two weeks on which might be stamped "Park Despoiler" or "Paper Litterer"? The city could provide several thousand of these badges and supply every park policeman with a dozen or more, which he could carry around with him on his daily beat ready to fasten upon an offender who threw down paper, fruit skins or peanut shells.

The beautiful lawn in Central Park between West Eighty-sixth and West Ninetieth streets is all littered over with newspapers, not accidentally dropped but deliberately thrown there every Sunday and holiday. Shall we allow our magnificent park to be so abused? HELEN C. BROWN.

New York, June 10, 1921.

Appeal to Public Opinion

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I note that every spring there is an indignant protest against the vandalism in our parks. I refer chiefly to the destruction of vegetation, the annoying of the animals, the wholesale littering of the sidewalks and grass with discarded papers, boxes, etc.

Would it not be practicable to abate this nuisance by stimulating and utilizing the same force of public opinion that proved so effective during the war? Let us make it decidedly "not the thing" to throw our refuse on the grass. Wasn't the success of the famous "gasless Sundays" largely due to the "what will people say" feeling, were we to run our cars? T. C. W.

New York, June 9, 1921.

Vandals Unpunished

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The protest of "A. L. P." will be echoed by all lovers of our parks and wild spots now being utterly ruined by vandals utterly destitute of a civic consciousness or even of common decency.

What makes the matter almost hopeless, however, as in the parallel case of our sanitary regulations for the protection of all the people, is the unaccountable callousness of certain of our magistrates, who render enforcement of the law wellnigh impossible. A few days ago, according to the press, a magistrate administered a reprimand to the police for doing their plain duty in endeavoring to save our parks from destruction because, forsooth, it was inconvenient for his honor to try so many cases! When a magistrate takes this attitude, park vandals, subway smokers, sidewalk spitters and other anti-social persons naturally feel that they can do as they please and that the public will have no redress. Are they not about right?

JAMES F. MORTON JR.

New York, June 9, 1921.

Excessive Fire Losses

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Your editorial "The Insurance Burden" in last Sunday's Tribune intimates that the fire insurance companies are in a measure responsible for the present excessive fire losses. I believe you are right.

Fire insurance as at present conducted has one very bad feature, namely, every small loss, even if caused by the carelessness of the insured, is paid. This is wrong.

The proper method would be to make the insured bear the loss up to, say, 10 per cent of the policy, the insurance company paying any loss above this to the full amount of the policy.

If the insured knew that he woud be the first to suffer loss from any fire it would make him more careful. It would also tend to prevent over-insurance, as a man would hesitate to insure a $5,000 stock for $10,000 if he knew that, provided the loss did not exceed $1,000, he could not receive a cent.

It would prevent many fires and would save the insurance companies the expense and annoyance of adjusting many small losses.

Under this system fire insurance rates could be reduced, but that is just what the companies do not want.

Probably the insured would also object, as they do not realize that at present they are paying for the carelessness and dishonesty of the other fellow. X.

West Hartford, Conn., June 9, 1921.